

and graduations. They will miss evening dinners and holidays. They leave behind mortgages, car payments, and college-tuition payments. These 9/11 illnesses not only rob families of their loved ones, but they leave them to face expenses without, in many cases, the family's primary breadwinner.

Two weeks ago, hundreds of first responders from all over the country traveled to Washington to lobby Congress not to let their health care program expire. If Congress doesn't act now, how many more first responders and their families are going to suffer medically and financially because we didn't do our job and reauthorize this program?

Let me tell you about just one responder, Ken George from Long Island. Ken was 37 on September 11, 2001. He was working for the New York City Highway Department, and after the attacks he went to do search and rescue work. He was there for a couple of weeks. Almost right away, Ken developed a cough, then asthma, and then the asthma led to restricted airway disease. Doctors found crushed glass from Ground Zero in his lungs. He was forced to retire in 2006 because his medical ailments became too burdensome, and now, as he put it, he is "financially hurting like you wouldn't believe."

We are not talking about statistics. We are not talking about data points on a chart. We are talking about a 51-year-old man with a wife and three kids, with crushed glass in his lungs because he chose to do the right thing. He chose to answer the call of duty, and he chose to search for survivors after 9/11. On top of everything else he is dealing with, Ken now has to worry if he will get the health treatments he needs and if his family will have the basic financial support they need.

The health program officially expires tomorrow at midnight, but these illnesses—Ken's and thousands of others—never expire, and neither should their health care.

We must reauthorize and make permanent the World Trade Center Health Program and Victim Compensation Fund. The participants in the health program live in every single State. They live in 429 of the 435 congressional districts. Every Senator in this Chamber has constituents who are sick and dying and are in this program.

A majority of this body has already signed on as cosponsors of this legislation, including many after our day of action a couple weeks ago. So let's finish this job. Let's give our 9/11 heroes the care and compensation they deserve and so desperately need. Let's truly never forget. The clock is ticking. Let's do our job.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECESS

PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12 noon, recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

TSA OFFICE OF INSPECTION ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2015—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise today to say a few words about the latest developments in international trade.

As most of my colleagues know, this week officials from the Obama administration are meeting in Atlanta with representatives from our negotiating partners in the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP. Many reports indicate that our trade negotiators are hoping to conclude talks and finalize a deal over the next few days.

Now, as the Presiding Officer is aware, I was an original author of the legislation that renewed trade promotion authority, or TPA, earlier this year. I fought extremely hard to renew TPA because I believe it is an absolutely essential tool to ensure we get the very best trade agreements possible. For years I have been one of the most outspoken proponents in Congress for full engagement in the various trade agreements that have been under negotiation, including the TPP.

A strong Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement could greatly enhance our Nation's ability to compete in an increasingly global marketplace and result in a healthier economy and more high-paying jobs that come with increased U.S. trade. After all, when we are talking about the 12 countries currently taking part in these negotiations, we are talking about 40 percent of the global economy. As a group, TPP countries represent the largest market for our goods and services exports. Trade with these countries already supports an estimated 4 million U.S. jobs, and, with a good trade agreement in place, I believe it can do even better.

The Asia-Pacific region, where this agreement is focused, is one of the most economically vibrant and fastest growing areas in the world. According to the International Monetary Fund, the world economy will grow by more than \$20 trillion over the next 5 years, and nearly half of that growth will be in Asia. Unfortunately, our share of exports to the Asia-Pacific has been on the decline, as exports to the region lag behind overall U.S. export growth. One reason U.S. companies have lost so much market share in this very impor-

tant part of the world is that many countries in the region maintain steep barriers to U.S. exports while they have been negotiating to remove many of the same types of barriers for other countries, most notably for places such as China and the European Union.

On average, Southeast Asian countries impose tariffs that are five times higher than the average U.S. tariff. In addition, their duties on U.S. agricultural products often reach triple digits. There are also numerous other barriers, such as regulatory restrictions, that impede access for U.S. exporters in many of these countries. These obstacles, and increased global competition, have made it increasingly difficult for U.S. companies to remain competitive in Asia.

Put simply, a strong TPP Agreement is the best tool we could have to increase the growth of U.S. exports to the Asia-Pacific region.

There are also important strategic and security reasons to support a strong TPP Agreement. We have all seen in recent years how the economies of our Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiating partners have been shaped by China's expanding economic influence. I think we would all prefer that the United States remain the world leader in trade. If we want to maintain and expand our influence in the Asia-Pacific, it is essential that we more fully engage in that region. A strong TPP Agreement will facilitate that engagement and help ensure that trade patterns develop under a U.S. model, operating under U.S. rules and applying U.S. standards.

A strong TPP Agreement can help us create high-paying jobs through increased exports, as well as help secure our strategic and economic position in the Asia-Pacific region. But to do all of that, we need a strong agreement. That is why I have been pushing the Obama administration to negotiate wisely in order to reach a TPP Agreement that advances our Nation's interests and provides significant benefits for American workers and job creators.

Despite these obvious advantages to concluding a TPP Agreement, I think it is critically important that the administration take the time necessary to get the agreement right. A number of key issues are outstanding, and how they are resolved will go a long way to determining whether I can support the final agreement.

Our country has a long history of negotiating and reaching high-standard trade agreements. While they haven't all been perfect, our existing trade agreements have, in my view, advanced our interests in foreign markets and strengthened our own economy.

There are a number of reasons why, historically, our trade negotiators have fought long and hard to get gold-standard agreements. The most obvious reason is that anything less is unlikely to pass through Congress. If the administration is serious about not only getting an agreement but getting an